green plan:

progress towards a sustainable environment

December 2005

NOVA SCOTIA

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minister's message

In 2003, the Nova Scotia government launched its *Green Plan: Towards a Sustainable Environment*. Since then, much has been done to protect our natural environment and build a culture of environmental sustainability in Nova Scotia.

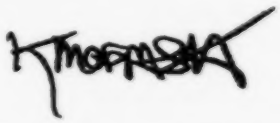
We are pleased to share our success stories in *Green Plan: Progress Towards a Sustainable Environment*. This report highlights the critical links between a sustainable environment, strong communities, healthy Nova Scotians, and economic prosperity.

Government departments, businesses, community organizations, and individual Nova Scotians all have a responsibility to protect the environment. Our successes to date are evidence that we are taking this responsibility seriously.

I believe we are making true progress, and we must continue on this path, building on the successes outlined in this report and creating new opportunities for the future.

I invite Nova Scotians to review this report and consider how every one of us can contribute to a sustainable environment for future generations to enjoy.

Sincerely yours,



Kerry Morash
Minister of Environment and Labour

introduction

As Nova Scotians, we enjoy a rich and unique quality of life. Our diverse communities offer a wide range of lifestyle choices and economic opportunities. We also have an environment that sustains us, providing for our province's well-being and economic growth. Keeping this environment healthy is key to safeguarding our heritage. It is important to us, and we must take care of it in order to maintain and enhance our quality of life.

Government, industry, individuals, and community organizations must work together to minimize our effect—individually and collectively—on the environment. Through our day-to-day operations and in creating a vision for future growth and prosperity, the Government of Nova Scotia is working to ensure that our decisions and actions are environmentally responsible.

In 2004, the government consulted with Nova Scotians on the themes outlined in *Towards a Sustainable Environment*. More than 200 individuals and organizations submitted nearly 2000 comments. The many comments and suggestions received were instrumental in developing further plans and priorities.

The Province of Nova Scotia's approach to environmental management is based on the following principles:

- Environmental protection is essential to the integrity of ecosystems, human health, and the socio-economic well-being of society.
- Managing the environment is a shared responsibility involving all citizens in Nova Scotia.
- An integrated approach that addresses environmental, social, and economic considerations is the most effective way to deal with environmental issues.

Towards a Sustainable Environment, a Green Plan for Nova Scotia, was released in June 2003. Our plan describes a renewed commitment and vision to guide us in managing the environment—one that unites all government departments in the effort and recognizes the important links between our environment, our health, and our economy. Through this report, we are pleased to share our progress and to highlight some recent successes of which Nova Scotians can be particularly proud.

leading by example

All of us make choices, or take actions, that can have an effect on our environment. The Nova Scotia government encourages citizens to make decisions or act in ways that have either positive environmental consequences or a minimal negative effect. Through the Green Plan, we are setting an example of environmental responsibility that we hope will inspire industry, business, citizens, and other levels of government to follow our lead.

Strengthening policy direction

A commitment to environmental responsibility is hollow without a clear, sound policy behind it. Policies provide guidance for actions and communicate principles and values. They help us to measure progress toward goals.

To help us meet the goals outlined in our Green Plan, the government has approved an environmental management policy. This policy promotes a coherent, government-wide approach to managing the environment. A committee has been established to oversee implementation of this policy, which will result in

- more consistent consideration of the environmental implications of new government policies and programs before they are introduced
- better coordination across government in tracking and communicating environmental results

Greening operations

The Nova Scotia government is taking a leadership role in environmental management by getting its own house in order. We are committed to reducing our own effect on the environment by making environmentally responsible choices.

For example, our Green Energy Framework, *Smart Choices for Cleaner Energy*, outlines a plan to improve the energy efficiency and overall environmental sustainability of our operations. Implementation of the framework will include activities such as government purchase of renewable energy and alternative fuels, energy-efficiency improvements for existing government facilities, and procurement of less energy-intensive and more environmentally responsible goods and services.

The Nova Scotia government spends about $1 billion annually on goods and services and new construction. It owns and manages approximately 2000 buildings and leases 200 more. Government-wide, the fleet includes more than 2000 assorted vehicles.

A multi-departmental team has been established to examine government's overall purchasing practices and to develop green specifications for procurement of goods and services. The team has hosted a green purchasing workshop for staff, worked with the Halifax Regional Municipality to identify barriers to environmentally responsible purchasing, and developed purchasing specifications for environmentally friendly paper.

Green procurement means buying goods and services that reduce adverse environmental impacts through more efficient use of energy and/or reduction or elimination of toxic substances and waste.

Future work includes developing green specifications for other products, such as vehicles and electronic office equipment. Staff training programs and information tools will be implemented to encourage environmentally responsible purchasing. The Nova Scotia government will invest a total of $1 million to continue these types of interdepartmental work that result in greener internal programs and policies.

Progress toward greening operations is also being made at the departmental level, for example:

- Environment and Labour is implementing a pollution prevention plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, toxic substances, and waste from its operations. Some specific initiatives include installing motion sensors for boardroom lighting, purchasing gas/electric hybrid vehicles, installing water conservation devices, and purchasing fleet bikes for urban transportation. A "how-to" toolkit has been developed to encourage all departments to develop their own pollution prevention plans.

Pollution prevention, sometimes called P2, is the use of processes, practices, materials, products, or energy that avoid or minimize the creation of pollutants and waste, at the source.

- Transportation and Public Works has improved the energy efficiency of government buildings through government's House-In-Order program. Potential savings from this program are estimated at around 20 per cent of government's total energy costs—saving Nova Scotia taxpayers about $3 million a year. Greenhouse gas emissions will also be cut by about 3372 tonnes annually—the equivalent of exhaust from 1000 cars.

The Model National Energy Code of Canada for Buildings is intended to help design energy-efficient buildings. It sets out minimum requirements for features of buildings that determine their energy efficiency, taking into account regional construction costs, regional heating fuel types and costs, and regional climatic differences. All new government-funded buildings have exceeded the energy performance targets of this code by 25 per cent.

- Community Services has implemented energy and water conservation programs in many of its housing units. For example, the units have been retrofitted for energy efficiency by air sealing, installing more efficient lighting, and insulating crawl spaces. All new windows, refrigerators, and front-load washers have Energy Star ratings. Inefficient boilers and oil-fired hot water heaters have been replaced with high-efficiency units. Flow restrictors on taps and shower heads and low-flow replacement fixtures reduce water consumption. A specialized software program helps to monitor, track, and report energy consumption at various Community Services properties, therefore enabling targeted improvements where needed.

sustainable communities

A clean, healthy environment is crucial for maintaining sustainable communities. Sustainable communities are essential to the future strength and prosperity of this province. In our Green Plan, we pledged to support communities in their environmental management efforts.

When communities demonstrate a commitment to environmental responsibility, they help protect the health of their residents and create opportunities for their continued economic development. In that spirit, government consulted with communities to create a Community Development Policy. We have been using this policy since December 2004 to work better with communities across Nova Scotia and provide guidance to environmental programs.

Preventing pollution

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

When it comes to protecting our communities from the risk of environmental impacts, this familiar saying still rings true. Individuals and business owners understand that it is more cost effective to prevent an environmental incident or spill than to clean it up. The benefits of pollution prevention have been demonstrated through several recent projects—all delivered through government collaborations with Nova Scotia's communities.

A pilot project in Lunenburg sponsored by government has helped to conserve water, save energy, and significantly reduce the release of harmful substances into the environment. With participation from regional government, residents, local businesses, schools, and organizations, Lunenburg has become a stronger, healthier community.

Building on the success of this program, a pollution prevention guide for municipalities has been developed. It provides practical information about effective methods that further reduce municipal impacts on the environment and also save money.

The Nova Scotia government has also provided funding to the Eco-Efficiency Business Assistance Program to support community-driven pollution prevention. The program subsidizes small and medium-sized businesses throughout Nova Scotia to help them assess their operations for eco-efficiency and pollution prevention opportunities.

An independent evaluation of the program indicates that it has met or exceeded its targets. Potential benefits of the Eco-Efficiency Business Assistance Program include nearly $1.3 million in annual cost savings to businesses and significant environmental benefits through the reduction of

- 82 120 gigajoules of energy
- 5407 tonnes of greenhouse gases
- 12 187 m^3 of water
- 3090 tonnes of solid waste
- 12 187 m^3 of wastewater
- 2.3 tonnes of other toxins

Supporting communities in action

The Nova Scotia government plays a key role in supporting the environmental goals of many local community groups and organizations across the province. Each year, we provide funding, access to technical expertise, and people to assist these groups with projects aimed at conserving and enhancing the environment.

For example, Adopt-A-Stream is a government program designed to help Nova Scotians improve the quality of the environment. By working with hundreds of volunteers from community and school groups across the province, we help raise awareness of conservation and issues related to inland waters and fish. The funding for Adopt-A-Stream is made available through the Nova Scotia Sportfish Habitat Fund. In 2005 the fund sponsored 18 projects and provided over $200,000 to the program.

Government provides financial support for many programs and organizations that help communities manage and protect their environments. For example, over $100,000 in government investment enabled the Wildlife Habitat Conservation Fund to support 14 wildlife conservation projects in 2005. Since the program began in 2001 almost half a million dollars has been provided for wildlife conservation. Projects ranged from restoring plant habitat to recovery programs for the roseate tern and the river otter.

Government is helping Nova Scotians decrease their greenhouse gas emissions by reducing residential energy use. *Smart Choices for Cleaner Energy*, government's Green Energy Framework, was released in October 2005. This framework outlines an energy-efficient housing program that includes financial support for

- energy-efficiency improvements for low-income homeowners, those in rental accommodations, and non-profit organizations
- upgrades to the province's 11,000 seniors and family housing units to improve energy performance
- building and purchasing of new homes that are as energy efficient as possible

The Nova Scotia government also provided $60,000 in funding to the Climate Change Centre, a program hosted by Clean Nova Scotia. The centre's goal is to deliver public education and community outreach activities on climate change, while supporting other organizations in developing activities to address climate change. For example, the centre leads a program called Towards a Brighter Future, which teaches elementary school children about energy efficiency and how to conduct an energy audit in their school.

Government actively participates in the community-led Adopt-A-Highway program. This program mobilizes volunteers to pick up litter along Nova Scotia's roads. Each year, volunteers pick up more than 6000 bags of litter. Government supports this internationally renowned program by removing bagged garbage and other material; providing safety vests, garbage bags, and flagging tape; arranging for the removal of animal carcasses and hazardous goods; and recognizing volunteer groups by posting signs on the highway.

Government is facilitating coordinated conservation activities around Bras d'Or Lake in Cape Breton. A number of government departments, united by their shared interest in conservation and protection of the Bras d'Or, have dedicated time and expertise and have appointed a full-time coordinator to this task.

The Pitu'paq Committee, a partnership of five First Nations and five municipal leaders, has made significant progress towards addressing sewage contamination. The committee is currently working on developing environmental bylaws for First Nations. Another project, the Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative, has united governments, First Nations, and community groups to develop a coordinated management plan to address environmental issues around Bras d'Or Lake.

Enjoying and protecting our natural spaces

The Nova Scotia government recognizes the importance of protecting significant natural areas for the enjoyment and benefit of current and future generations. As part of our Green Plan, we amended the Special Places Protection Act to make nature reserve designation more efficient and more attractive for private land owners.

Government also continues to encourage land owners to contribute to our network of protected areas through private land donations and conservation easements. Together with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, we have formed the Lands and Legacies Conservation Partnership, which allows the trust to acquire more private natural lands for conservation.

Over the past year, more than 10 000 hectares of land—the second largest amount of land protected in a single year in the history of the province—have been designated as protected. In 2005, government designated two new wilderness areas at Gully Lake, Pictou County, and Eigg Mountain–James River, Antigonish County, four new (and one expanded) nature reserve properties, and nine additions to existing wilderness areas.

With a focus on community and stakeholder partnerships, we are developing a process to work towards a comprehensive system of protected areas. For example, we are helping the Town of Antigonish designate town lands under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act. We are also supporting innovative research at the new Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute and proceeding with a background study to help determine if the Shubenacadie Waterway is a potential candidate for nomination as a Canadian Heritage River.

New and Expanded Wilderness Areas

- Economy River
- Lake Rossignal
- North River
- Terence Bay (2 parcels)
- Tobeatic Wilderness Area (3 parcels)
- White Lake Wilderness Area
- Gully Lake
- Egg Mountain–James River

New and Expanded Nature Reserves

- Duncan's Cove
- Quinns Meadow
- Spinney's Heath
- Great Barren and Quinan Lakes
- MacFarlane Woods

Coastal lands provide important habitat for waterfowl, wildlife, seabirds, plants, and shorebirds, particularly endangered species such as the piping plover and the thread-leaved sundew plant. To maintain this habitat, government seized the opportunity to purchase more than 3,000 hectares of coastal properties in Nova Scotia since 2003. This investment will ensure continued public ownership and conservation of Nova Scotia's coastline for centuries to come.

More than 50,000 off-highway vehicles (OHVs) are estimated to be currently in use in the province. Nova Scotia's Wilderness Areas Protection Act restricts OHV use in wilderness areas. Government's Off-highway Vehicles in Nova Scotia Provincial Direction and Action Plan commits to strengthen legislation and improve enforcement to protect wilderness areas, sensitive ecological areas, and drinking water supplies from the impacts of OHV use. Already, government has hired six new off-highway vehicle enforcement officers, with an additional six officers to be hired by February 2006. One of the key roles of these officers is to promote and enforce all current and any new OHV legislative requirements for land use and environmental protection.

Promoting industry stewardship

The importance of managing waste for the benefit of both our environment and the economy is reflected in Nova Scotia's solid waste-resource management strategy. This strategy has improved Nova Scotia's environmental performance and helped us develop a reputation as world leaders in solid waste management.

Since this strategy was introduced, we have diverted more than one million tonnes of waste from Nova Scotia's landfills. Innovative stewardship agreements for items such as beverage containers, paint, tires, used oil, medical sharps, newspapers, and telephone books have also made a difference. Our success is clear through the recycling of

- 1.7 billion beverage containers
- more than 6 million tires
- more than 600 000 litres of leftover paint

What was once thrown away is now being converted into new products, jobs, and economic opportunities. Nova Scotia sends less waste per person to landfills than any other province and employs more than 3000 people in the solid waste-resource field.

Much of the success of the strategy can be attributed to municipalities across Nova Scotia, which are responsible for collecting and managing recyclables, organic materials, and waste. Industry also plays a direct role in efforts to reduce the amount of solid waste that is sent to our landfills. That is why we plan to continue to work with industry on innovative stewardship agreements. These agreements prompt industry to design and manufacture products that can be reused and to offer recycling programs to consumers. This can have a positive effect on their bottom line because it reduces the cost of raw materials. Government is continuing to work with industry to identify new stewardship opportunities that are good for both business and the environment.

Government continues to seek new opportunities to further reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills. For example, rapid advancements in electronic technology have led to a dramatic increase in the amount of electronic waste in landfills. In 2003, it was estimated that Nova Scotians disposed of more than 4500 tonnes of electronic waste. By 2010, this number is expected to increase to 5000 tonnes. Much of this waste contains hazardous materials such as mercury, lead, and flame retardants that pose risks to human health.

In response to this potential risk, government is considering ways to reduce the number of televisions, computers, and other electronic products entering provincial landfills. We also seek to encourage economic opportunities for businesses interested in refurbishing and recycling electronic equipment.

human health and environmental quality

Recognizing the important link between our health and the quality of our environment, the Nova Scotia government, through its Green Plan, is committed to continuous improvement in managing and protecting our environment to safeguard the health of all Nova Scotians.

Improving air quality

Many Nova Scotians have respiratory and cardiovascular problems that are made worse by poor air quality. Nova Scotia's Energy Strategy, supported by the Green Plan, sets targets for the reduction of specific air pollutants, including sulphur dioxide, mercury, and nitrous oxides. These pollutants are both generated in Nova Scotia and transported here by prevailing winds from other provinces and countries. They contribute to problems such as smog and acid rain, and they affect water, land, and food.

By amending the Air Quality Regulations, government has made considerable progress toward meeting the targets outlined in both the Energy Strategy and the Green Plan. To comply with these new regulations, the province's electric power generation sector and other industries must reduce the quantity of pollutants released into the atmosphere. These reductions also support government's commitments to the New England Governors and Atlantic Canadian Premiers Climate Change Action Plan.

Nova Scotia is participating in a series of Canada-wide standards for air contaminants such as particulate matter, ozone, dioxins, and furans. In addition, we are working with the other provinces and the federal government to develop a Canada-wide standard for mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants. If this proposed standard is approved as planned by the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment in March 2006, Nova Scotia's mercury emissions cap will be 65 kg per year, starting in 2010. This is equivalent to reducing mercury emissions by 56 per cent. Combined with previous reductions, Nova Scotia's mercury emissions in 2010 will be reduced by more than 70 per cent since 2001.

New industrial air emission fees introduced in 2003 have enabled the hiring of additional staff required to support a stronger air quality program. Government's air quality program is currently improving the way air issues are managed, based on a better understanding of how pollutants move around, interact and get deposited. This will lead to more targeted controls for areas of the province that are affected by air pollution.

In partnership with the federal government, the Nova Scotia government has established an extensive air quality-monitoring network, which continues to be upgraded. By measuring the amounts and types of air pollution in different areas, we have better information on which to base decisions and plan the necessary actions to improve air quality in the province. Working with Environment Canada, government is providing Nova Scotians with up-to-date air quality indices and forecasts through our air quality website (www.gov.ns.ca/enla/air/airquality/index.asp). Nova Scotians can now make informed decisions about their risk of exposure to pollutants as they plan their daily activities.

Safeguarding water

Having ready access to plenty of fresh, clean water is something we often take for granted in Nova Scotia. To ensure a continued supply that meets the needs of current and future generations, the Nova Scotia government is taking a coordinated and proactive approach to protect this vital resource. Our efforts are guided by the Drinking Water Strategy for Nova Scotia, which outlines our comprehensive measures for drinking water management, including

- keeping water sources clean (source protection)
- making water safe to drink (treatment)
- proving it is safe (testing)

The strategy was released in 2002 with a three-year action plan. All of the action items have now been completed on time and within budget. With a better, more rigorous government approval process for municipal water utilities, we are now confident they are all run by certified operators and follow clear and consistent standards for water treatment.

Comprehensive water supply protection, treatment, and operational plans are in place or under development in all municipalities. Work is also under way to examine requirements for drinking water supplies that do not currently require an approval or registration.

Public drinking water supplies, such as those that serve campgrounds and some rural schools, are now registered with the province. Site owners must conduct routine testing and, where results exceed health-related guidelines, immediately notify government and address the problem. Checks and balances are also in place through compliance promotion and monitoring programs to further ensure the continued safety of these supplies.

Government is building on the success of the drinking water strategy by developing programs and policies that protect crucial watersheds and aquatic habitats. We have made upgrades to our surface and groundwater monitoring networks, resulting in more data that improves our ability to manage both water quality and quantity.

Water quality goals and water resource protection options are being established for other water uses, such as protection of aquatic life, crop irrigation, livestock watering, and recreational activities. We are also reviewing water availability for a variety of users—residential, industrial, and agricultural—to ensure that supplies continue to meet demand.

Managing hazardous substances

Hazardous substances are all around us and take many forms—from industrial chemicals, to the fuels that power our vehicles and heat our homes, to household maintenance products. The Nova Scotia government is committed to minimizing their potential effect on the environment through effective management.

We are reviewing our current laws that set the requirements for use, transportation, storage, disposal, and cleanup of hazardous substances. Our goals are to improve clarity and identify opportunities for streamlining and harmonizing with other jurisdictions. Concepts such as "polluter pay" and "life-cycle management" will be incorporated into new approaches.

There are many solutions besides government regulations to reduce environmental risks associated with hazardous substances. For example, home heating oil spills are a growing concern, because of both the environmental damage they cause and the escalating costs to clean them up. The very large size and complexity of this issue make it difficult for a single organization to resolve.

We are working closely with stakeholders, such as the home heating oil and insurance industries, on voluntary programs to improve the integrity of construction, installation, and maintenance of domestic oil tank systems and on streamlining processes to reduce cleanup costs and time. These proactive, co-operative approaches by industry and government can be a practical and cost-effective way to achieve desired environmental and human health protection goals.

sustainable growth

A healthy environment is essential for maintaining Nova Scotia's economic growth and competitive business climate. By integrating economic and environmental goals through development of a series of complementary strategies, the Nova Scotia government will demonstrate its commitment to sustainable growth. The Green Plan, a strategy that spans departments, provides a solid foundation for linking environmental objectives with opportunities for responsible economic growth.

Promoting sustainable growth and environmental compliance

The Nova Scotia government is committed to ensuring that Nova Scotia's regulatory regime contributes to a competitive business climate, while at the same time effectively protecting the environment.

The province's Regulatory Reform Project, an initiative launched in the spring of 2005 to further the work of the Red Tape Reduction Task Force, is taking a look at Nova Scotia's regulatory activity and its effect on business.

Under this government-wide initiative, Environment and Labour has launched a Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative. In relation to the environment, this initiative focuses on improving the quality of environmental regulations and the effectiveness of environmental compliance promotion and enforcement programs. The department's goal is to improve the province's environmental performance, reduce regulatory burden, and provide a more-level playing field for business.

A number of initiatives are under way to improve the quality and effectiveness of the environmental regulatory system and to support a competitive business climate. Current examples include the following:

- A revised and strengthened compliance and enforcement policy for environmental inspectors: The revised policy supports more consistent and effective compliance and enforcement while increasing predictability and fairness for industry.

- A pilot project designed to streamline the application process for on-site septic systems: This will reduce time spent by property owners and inspectors on administrative processes and will allow resources to be refocused on environmental protection.

- An economic impact analysis of the effect of Nova Scotia's proposed Electronic Product Stewardship Regulations on busines: The study will explore the potential positive and negative impacts of the regulations in an effort to ensure the province's continued economic competitiveness.

- A revised *Environmental Regulations Handbook for Nova Scotia Agriculture*: The revised handbook gives farmers information on the latest environmental regulations and municipal bylaws, so they can better comply with all provincial statutes and regulations.

- Amendments to the Special Places Protection Act: The changes, passed in spring 2005, streamline the process for interested land owners to have their property designated as a nature reserve and protected for all Nova Scotians to enjoy.

- Development of a multi-year science strategy: The strategy will ensure that environmental regulatory programs are supported by the best available science and that the science is readily available to staff and to stakeholders.

Government is also committed to working with other jurisdictions, both nationally and within the Atlantic region, to promote environmental sustainability. In 2005, the Minister of Environment and Labour was president of the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment (CCME). During this time, Nova Scotia led the development of a draft Commitment Statement on Environmental Sustainability in Canada. Nova Scotia's leadership and active participation in advancing this initiative through the CCME and across the Atlantic region demonstrates our commitment to the principles and objectives outlined in this document.

Finding environmental solutions

Innovation and technology offer the potential for new solutions that prevent pollution or clean up contaminated land and water. By supporting innovation and technology, the Nova Scotia government is playing a key role in the development of environmental management processes, products, services—even industries—that will help us maintain the province's health while contributing to its economic prosperity.

Government has been seeking new technologies and approaches to address pollution resulting from poorly maintained or malfunctioning private septic systems. Although regulated by the province, these systems are the responsibility of individual homeowners. Many low-income families cannot afford the cost of repairing or upgrading a septic system. This can lead to contamination of local ground or surface water.

In July 2005, the Municipality of the County of Victoria entered into a government-sponsored pilot program to use Norwegian technology for more affordable treatment of septic tank sludge. Through the program, 200 private septic systems will be pumped out, with costs shared between the province, the municipality, and local homeowners. This unique program demonstrates the Nova Scotia government's commitment to seek innovative, affordable solutions that use the best available technologies to help rural homeowners prevent or address environmental issues.

As part of our efforts to keep our communities safe and healthy, government has invested nearly $50 million to ensure the safety of our drinking water and provide more reliable waste-water systems for all Nova Scotians. To date, this investment has resulted in new water treatment plants for Yarmouth, Glace Bay, Hantsport, Halifax, and Antigonish and wastewater treatment plants in Pugwash, Sydney, Little Dover, Tatamagouche, and Meteghan—all contributing to the quality of life in these communities.

Other infrastructure projects, such as the Little Dover sewage treatment and Hantsport water utility project, have used innovative approaches to deliver essential municipal services. In addition to conserving and improving the quality of the environment, these projects are equipping communities with 21st-century infrastructure, which will protect their health for years to come.

The Agricultural Policy Framework Implementation Agreement is a federal-provincial-territorial initiative designed to help Canada be a world leader in food safety and quality and in environmentally responsible production and innovation. One element of this agreement is the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program. This program helps farmers improve the environmental performance of their farms and the management of natural resources associated with farmland. Nova Scotia has surpassed enrolment targets, with 670 farms in the program. This represents 27 per cent of all farms in Nova Scotia and more than 51 000 hectares of farmland.

Addressing climate change

Climate change is generally recognized within the scientific community as one of the most serious problems affecting the environment in the world today. Nova Scotia is potentially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change because of its coastal infrastructure, as well as the significant economic role of our natural resource sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fishing, and aquaculture.

The Nova Scotia government plays an important role in decreasing emissions of greenhouse gases that cause climate change, as well as addressing the impacts and necessary adaptations to climate change. *Smart Choices for Cleaner Energy*, the Green Energy Framework, describes government's approach to reducing greenhouse gases by supporting improved energy efficiency and conservation and increased use of renewable energy by Nova Scotians.

Government funds and supports partner organizations, such as Clean Nova Scotia and the Ecology Action Centre, on a wide variety of initiatives focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We are also making significant progress with respect to renewable energy. Since the release of the Green Plan in 2003, Nova Scotia has 100 megawatts of wind power online or under development, and we are committed to at least doubling that amount by 2010.

The Nova Scotia government is also dedicated to working with all levels of government in Canada on this issue, as well as with leaders of neighbouring states. We support the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers Climate Change Action Plan and will continue to work with other provinces and states to meet our region's climate change goals.

We are working with municipalities and industries to help them adapt to the impacts of climate change and to meet the objectives of the Kyoto Protocol. We have worked with the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and the Atlantic Farmers Council to develop funding opportunities for the creation of an Atlantic Alternative Energy Centre for the province's agriculture industry. The centre will help develop alternative energy technologies, such as wind power, for farms.

The Kyoto Protocol is a document signed by about 180 countries at Kyoto, Japan, in December 1997. The protocol commits 38 industrialized countries to cut their emissions of greenhouse gases between 2008 to 2012 to levels that are 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels.

We also helped create and manage ClimAdapt, a network of environmental consultants dedicated to understanding how our climate is changing and how we might adapt. ClimAdapt recently launched a project with the Halifax Regional Municipality that will help the city develop management and planning tools to adapt to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The project, called Climate-SMART, will serve as a model that can be used by other communities.

Supporting sustainable natural resource sectors

Natural resources provide significant economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits to Nova Scotians. Government is working to maintain an appropriate balance so that natural resource use is sustainable and environmentally responsible, and natural resources continue to provide a substantial contribution to the provincial economy—particularly our rural economy.

To this end, the Nova Scotia government is developing a coordinated set of strategies for forests, minerals, parks, and biodiversity. Collectively, these resource management strategies will contribute to environmental sustainability and economic prosperity. Before we begin to draft these strategies, we will consult with our stakeholders, including First Nations, interest groups, and the general public.

To ensure continued growth in our tourism industry, Nova Scotia must maintain the quality of our natural environment and our remarkable coastal assets. In fact, we promote our province as Canada's foremost seacoast vacation destination.

The Nova Scotia government has a unique and successful partnership with the provincial tourism industry. We work together to ensure the continued competitiveness and economic viability of tourism in the province through the stewardship of our natural resources. SMART Tourism is a concept that integrates a range of activities, including the Tourism Minister's Task Force, the Sustainable Coastal Tourism Strategy, and other ongoing activities related to the Green Plan. One initiative, the Sustainable Tourism Communities Program, supported five community workshops in 2004–2005. These workshops foster awareness and increase knowledge of the role that environmental sustainability has to play in the tourism industry.

Nova Scotia's coastal assets are equally important to other industries. The vast majority of Nova Scotians live near or on the coast. Many make their living from the sea through traditional fishing activities and, more recently, aquaculture.

Aquaculture is a developing industry that can help diversify our traditional fishing industry and create new jobs for Nova Scotians. One major challenge for this sector, however, is concern about its environmental sustainability. To address this challenge, we are collaborating with the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia on an environmental monitoring program for the aquaculture industry. A selected number of aquaculture operations have been monitored for their environmental impacts.

The results of these assessments will be used to develop strategies to deal with potential risks to the environment. Government will use the program to ensure ongoing environmental sustainability of aquaculture in Nova Scotia.

taking stock

Nova Scotia has made considerable progress since the Green Plan was released in 2003. We must continue to improve in order to protect our environment for the benefit of present and future generations. In order to maintain and build upon the successes detailed in this report, our Green Plan will continue to evolve. Our future efforts will continue to focus on strengthening the links between a sustainable environment, strong communities, healthy Nova Scotians, and economic prosperity.

In that light, government re-affirms its commitment to

- review the progress we have made on an ongoing basis, while looking ahead to see how we can improve upon our performance and better meet our goals

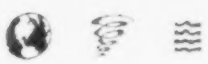
- share our achievements with all Nova Scotians through regular reports, such as this one

- forge stronger links among departments to achieve a consistent, unified approach in all of our environmental management activities and strategies

- recognize the environment as an asset to strategic economic development that will provide opportunities for growth in Nova Scotia's environmental industries sector and ensure that products and services produced in Nova Scotia meet increasingly demanding global environmental standards

- maintain an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders, and with the people of Nova Scotia, so that the principles and commitments made in our Green Plan remain relevant and enjoy broad support

Through these actions and commitments, the Nova Scotia government will continue to set an example for sound environmental management for governments around the world. More importantly, government will ensure that we continue to protect our province's unique beauty and lifestyle for years to come.



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